The AMERICAN SCHOLAR

Review: One Bad Husband: What the "Bluebeard" story tells us about marriage
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Source: *The American Scholar*, Vol. 74, No. 1 (WINTER 2005), pp. 129-132
Published by: The Phi Beta Kappa Society
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/41221385
Accessed: 21-06-2016 00:07 UTC

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wrote down an expression from which $E=mc^2$ follows immediately. Why Poincaré didn't explicitly write down the equation remains a puzzle. It is also an oversimplification to say that Einstein proved $E=mc^2$. He proposed it for a particular sort of system and showed that in this case it was approximately true. Only in 1911, apparently, did Hendrik Lorentz prove that $E=mc^2$ was a universal truth.

The centennial festivities proceed, but those tempted less by celebration than by historical nuance might go back to *Einstein's Miraculous Year*. Although the papers themselves are technical, the commentary provided by editor John Stachel is insightful without rising much above the level of Rigden's book. Those willing to decide for themselves what Einstein knew and what he didn't should go to the nearest university library and try the ur-text itself: *The Collected Papers*. The early letters aren't technical and have the advantage of being from the horse's mouth. A satisfying alternative is historian Jagdish Mehra's very readable *Golden Age of Theoretical Physics*, which not only contains a thoughtful chapter on special relativity but essays on most of the other major developments of twentieth-century physics.

Many more Einstein offerings are on the horizon. Judging from what has appeared, don't expect profundities. Instead, accept these contributions for what they are: a tribute to a great genius.

One Bad Husband

What the "Bluebeard" story tells us about marriage

Review by Alison Lurie

SECRETS BEHIND THE DOOR: The Story of Bluebeard and His Wives
By Maria Tatar
Princeton University Press / $24.95

Among the best-known fairy-tales, "Bluebeard" is an oddity. Unlike "Snow White," "Cinderella," "Beauty and the Beast," and many others, it does not end with a marriage. "Bluebeard" is not even technically a fairy story: it contains no witches or fairy godmothers or magic transformations; there is only one minor supernatural element, the permanent stain of blood on the key to the forbidden chamber. Stories like "Cinderella" tell us that a troubled, often unhappy adolescence ends with a happy marriage; "Bluebeard" tells us that the real trouble begins after the wedding. In the classic tales, the prince is charming, but the heroine's relatives are either hostile or weak or both. In "Bluebeard," however, the husband has already killed several previous wives, and when the heroine discovers their bodies, he intends to murder her. She is rescued just in time by her sister and brothers in some versions, her mother in others.

The heroine of this story is also, depending on how you look at it, morally flawed or very unlucky or both. In the first printed version, as one of Charles Perrault's *Tales of Mother Goose* (1697), she initially finds Bluebeard hideously ugly. But after she and her family and friends spend a week at one of his luxurious country houses, where there are "dinner services of gold and silver, beautifully upholstered furniture, and carriages covered in gold leaf" she decides that his beard "was not so blue after all," and agrees to marry him.

Alison Lurie received the Pulitzer Prize for her novel *Foreign Affairs*. Her nonfiction includes *Don't Tell the Grown-Ups: The Subversive Power of Children's Literature* and *Boys and Girls Forever: Children's Classics from Cinderella to Harry Potter*.

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Later, when he has given her the keys to every room in the house, but warned her to stay out of one small chamber, she can hardly wait to disobey his instructions.

As Maria Tatar says in her absorbing new study, *Secrets Beyond the Door: The Story of Bluebeard and His Wives,* the two most vital ingredients of the tale are "the curiosity of a woman and the secrets of a man." Though the moral at the end of Perrault's version warns against curiosity, Tatar has remarked in an interview in the *Harvard Gazette* that the wife's inquisitiveness was justified, "because she discovered that her husband was a serial killer." She suggests that "our own culture has turned [Bluebeard's wife] into something of a heroine, a woman whose problem-solving skills and psychological finesse make her a shrewd detective, capable of rescuing herself and often her marriage."

"Le Cabinet de Fées," 1786.

Tatar, who is the Loeb Professor of Germanic Languages and Literatures at Harvard, has written extensively on fairy tales (*The Hard Facts of the Grimms' Fairy Tales, Off With Their Heads!: Fairy Tales and the Culture of Childhood*) and on German fiction. In this fine book, which both scholars and ordinary readers will enjoy, as I did, she casts her net wide. She reprints several versions of "Bluebeard," and discusses not only these tales and their many variants (British, French, German, Italian, and Appalachian American, among others), but also the reappearance of the story in fiction, film, opera, and poetry.

Tatar's study of the Bluebeard theme in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca,* for instance, is thoughtful and fascinating, particularly in its analysis of the endings of both books. She points out that eventually both Jane and the second Mrs. de Winter "rather than aligning themselves with discovery and detection, become partners in crime," accessories after the fact. Tatar also follows the Bluebeard story into modern versions by Margaret Atwood, Angela Carter, and Kurt Vonnegut—and as far as popular romance and teenage detective fiction. Going even further, she presents Nabokov's *Lolita* as a Bluebeard tale, one in which Humbert Humbert destroys Lolita and her mother not by murdering them but by writing about them.

One of the best and most original chapters in *Secrets Beyond the Door* is the analysis of what Tatar calls the Bluebeard films of the 1940s: films like George Cukor's *Gaslight* and Alfred Hitchcock's *Suspicion,* in which husbands who have large expensive houses and awful secrets try to kill their wives or drive them mad. In these films the wife gradually becomes strong and independent enough to uncover the secret, but she does not have a supportive family (often she is an orphan with no siblings) and she does not escape the marriage. As Tatar says, "the happy endings are, once again, a letdown. When the secrets beyond the door to marriage are solved, there is real closure. The woman who has passed beyond the door is now permanently encased behind it. . . . And this, above all else, becomes the real course of living happily ever after."

Tatar is also interested in Bluebeard as a cultural hero, the victim rather than the villain of the story. In a chapter titled "Monstrous Wives," she traces a connection between modern fiction, drama, and film, and ancient views of women as insatiably and fatally curious, like

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the biblical Eve and Lot's wife, the Greek Psyche, and also Pandora (who opened a forbidden chest and released every known evil into the world). She discusses Anatole France's *The Seven Wives of Bluebeard* and Donald Barthelme's "Bluebeard," ironic rewritings of the story, both of which present the classic version as a parcel of lies: Bluebeard hasn't really murdered anyone, it turns out, and the inquisitive, greedy wife is the real villain. In the German playwright Ludwig Tieck's dramatization of the story, Tatar points out, "even Bluebeard's wife is appalled by her inability to resist curiosity."

Monstrous wives and a sympathetic Bluebeard figure, Tatar tells us, also appear in film, notably in Charlie Chaplin's 1947 film *Monsieur Verdoux*. Here the eponymous hero, whose name suggests both green nature (verdure) and sweetness (doux), is in fact "occupied in liquidating members of the opposite sex," but he kills in order to support his invalid wife and their children. Moreover, all of his victims deserve to die. Similarly, Uncle Charlie, the antihero of Hitchcock's *Shadow of a Doubt* (1943), only kills "useless women . . . smelling of money . . . Faded, fat, greedy women."

As *Secrets Beyond the Door* suggests, it is possible to read "Bluebeard" as a metaphor, a greatly exaggerated version of what marriage meant for many women in the past. In the seventeenth century, when Perrault first recorded the story, well-to-do and aristocratic women often married relative or even total strangers. In these marriages the bride was likely to be much younger and less experienced than the groom. Exogamy was traditional: when the woman married she left home and moved to wherever her husband lived and worked. Often, she knew no one there. A nice girl was also supposed to be a virgin on her wedding day, while her husband was assumed to have known other women. This was a pattern that persisted in Europe into the early twentieth century.

Naturally, the new bride in such marriages was often curious about her husband's past. Whom had he been involved with before he met her? If he had rejected one or more women, had there been violent, painful scenes? Was he a "lady-killer" in the conven-

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tional sense? Was his symbolic closet full of skeletons? Clues might appear in the form of letters and photos; friends might gossip, and sometimes the actual victims of the "lady-killer" would appear and tell their unhappy stories to the current wife.

Speculating about the popularity of Bluebeard films in 1940s Hollywood, Tatar points out that this "was, after all, a time of crisis, when women in great numbers were marrying men who were real strangers—soldiers going off to war. . . . It was also a time when women were realizing that the men to whom they had been married were becoming strangers. After experiencing the dark horrors of combat, veterans returned home disaffected and alienated." Many of these men had actually killed people—in a sense, like Bluebeard, they were murderers—and more often than not they wanted to shut these events away in a locked cupboard of their minds.

Today in America, it seems to me, the Bluebeard story has a different sort of resonance. More than fifty percent of marriages end in divorce, and most divorced people remarry. This means that many brides and grooms come to their wedding with serious emotional baggage. Unpacking this baggage, especially by force, can be a big mistake. The story of Bluebeard may be relevant again now because it warns women against obsessive curiosity about their partner's past. According to child psychologist Bruno Bettelheim, it "presents in the most extreme form the motif that as a test of trustworthiness, the female must not inquire into the secrets of the male." The lesson is still delivered frequently and, now, to both sexes: advice columnists warn their readers, both male and female, against revealing too much. They know that curiosity about their past can be destructive—even murderously destructive. Both women and men may discover that their spouses suffer from obsessive jealousy, not only spying on their daily life, but cross-questioning them about every date they have ever had. In this situation, I believe, "Bluebeard" still has meaning as a cautionary tale, warning us that though very few husbands or wives are serial killers, many have—and deserve to keep—their secrets.

Thoreau's Landscape Within

How he came to know nature, and through it came to know himself

Review by Kent C. Ryden

Henry Thoreau once famously noted that he had "traveled much in Concord," and over the years scholars have traveled equally much in Thoreau, finding in him a chorus of "representative men," to borrow a title from his friend and mentor Ralph Waldo Emerson. He is the exemplar of Emersonian self-reliance; he is the man who put transcendental philosophy into practice on the shores of Walden Pond; he is the voice of political conscience, forerunner of Gandhi and King; and, increasingly of late, he is a prominent poster boy for American environmentalism. (To borrow now from another of his contemporaries, Walt Whitman, Thoreau is large, he contains multitudes.)

NATURAL LIFE: Thoreau's Worldly Transcendentalism
By David M. Robinson
Cornell University Press | $24.95

While the still relatively new field of literary ecocriticism is burgeoning these days in all sorts of fruitful directions away from the study of conventional nature writing, it still seems difficult to talk about representations of the American environment without launching one's critical canoe onto Walden's waves or

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